

WHAT THE BUCK AND DOE DREAMED

The grass loves all who do not eat.

SUNFLOWERS

Pride humbles their faces earthward.

ASSASSIN

All that we love, we love alone.

ARNTSON AT TWENTY-THREE

He talks to us out of a dream,
lying on the slab of someone's patio,
his face slick from drunkenness. He wants
someone to "bring the equipment." We don't know
what tools he needs, unless it be
devices for survival -- an iron lung, a new heart.
We find only a swim-fin, and a mask
for looking into the stomach of the pool.
The eyes within his eyes
are open, are closed, are seeing
things he never knew.

We peel off his clothes
and wrap him in a blanket, carry him like a rug
slung over our shoulders, out of the house and into a truck.
He sprawls over the laps of the driver and my wife,
losing hold of the blanket, his long legs
exposed to the hip, the bare wings of his shoulders
gone slack
on all he knows.

And he wants to sleep
in the bed of the truck because he can't walk
the flight of steep stairs to bed, because he has to fly
to Los Angeles tomorrow, because he is dead
weight and can't be carried. But we lift him
to the stairs, and he walks half-way,
trailing the crazy quilt
like a prince floating toward coronation.
But we keep stepping on his train;
and that pulls him over backwards again and again
until he turns to ask, "Did Prince Hal really
have this kind of trouble?" That is the last
he says.

Half-way in the livingroom,
he dives at the couch as into immortality,
shedding the blanket like forgotten flesh, already asleep

before he strikes the cushions, before we
tuck the quilt around him, laughing, drunk
with his drunkenness. Tired of trying
to understand ourselves in him, those of us
who have a home, go home.

In the morning, while we are still
crossing each other with arms and legs in bed,
he will fly over us, for an instant,
in a jet, in a fog, in a dream that is moving away
toward a city of drunken angels.

ONE NIGHT STAND

Arntson worships the holy cross
of his body, and gives off
a strange light on his way to the barn.
Only the vacant space
where his body has been
follows him.
He knocks three times on the barn door.
No one lets him in. No
body is home. He bangs.
He kicks, claws at the wood with his nails.
And then he slides the latch himself.

Pigs and chickens, goats and cows
amble out, looking up
at his moon-blanced placid face
as though expecting
gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Arntson grows starry-eyed when he thinks
they might remember him
to their peaceable kingdoms.
He hurries to find the axe.

THE TURKISH HOTEL, THE BEDROOM IN DENVER

I know you are asleep, but
from the way you've lain your legs,
you might be dancing:
one foot raised
higher than its partner -- as if
you were about to leap somewhere
while a band of nomads clapped
their hands to keep the beat.

You seem about to snap
the red and yellow tassles of the blanket
from your back, to lead me